

Visions on Demand

By

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The video tape *Visions on Demand* achieves what its compilers had in mind when they made it: it totally destroys the credibility of all those who for more than 17 years have been pushing and manipulating the happenings at Medjugorje. What the video may lack in seamless professionalism it undoubtedly gains in overall coverage and sincerity. Not much of what has come to light in all those 17 years since the start of the hoax in 1981, and is becoming more widely known (especially in the Vatican), has been left unsaid.

One thing the video is silent on is the *origin* of the breakdown between the local hierarchies of Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and some of the Franciscans. For a proper understanding of this difficult question it is necessary that research into it goes back to the early years of the reign of *Pope Leo XIII* (who was elected on February 20, 1878). What this will bring to light is the subject-matter of this short paper.

Joachim Pecci brought with him to the papal throne as Pope Leo XIII the conviction that for the full benefit of Catholic life anywhere in the world, it is of the greatest importance that peoples everywhere are united with the Holy See through the establishment or the restoration of strong local hierarchies. That as early as 1880 he had in mind the regions which the great Apostle St. Paul had called *Illyricum* (Rom. 15:19), and which the Holy Father mentions by name as *Bohemia, Moravia, Croatia*, can be gauged from the fact that in that year the Holy Father issued an encyclical to remind the whole Catholic world of the immense missionary activities that had been carried out by the two great Saints of the Slavonic peoples: *St. Cyrillus* and *St. Methodius*, and to ask for prayers for the people populating these regions. This was obviously in preparation of what the Holy Father did the following year. For it was already in 1881 that he fully restored the Hierarchies of what he calls in the Apostolic Letter of Restoration "*the provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina*".

So, within a little more than two years after ascending to the See of St. Peter, Pope Leo XIII issued an *encyclical* in 1880 to prepare for his *Apostolic Letter* of 1881 by which he restored the hierarchies in Bosnia - Herzegovina. It is from these two Letters, so clearly representative of Leo XIII's mind, that I wish to bring the following extracts to the attention of all who are puzzled by the deep rifts that have right from the start shown up the happenings at Medjugorje as fraudulent exactly 100 years later.

We will deal with the second of these two Letters, the one of 1881, first.

The Holy Father starts the 1881 Apostolic Letter *Ex hac augusta* by which the Hierarchy of Bosnia – Herzegovina was being restored, by going right back to the earliest Christian times of these regions by relating that their conversion to Christianity was taken care of by the Apostle of the Gentiles himself, who in his Letter to the Romans could testify to the truth “...*from Jerusalem in all directions as far as Illyricum I have preached the Gospel of Christ*” (Rom. 15:19). Taking from recorded history household names such as *St. Luke, St. Clemens, St. Titus* as the successors of St. Paul, the Holy Father lays down the cornerstone of his whole argument when he declares:

“It is wonderful to say how beneficial it must have been for Christianity to have an Ecclesiastical Hierarchy founded of which the principal Sees were those of Thessalonica, Salonica and Smyrna, which rightly can glory over the fact that they received their first occupants from the two Princes of the Apostles themselves.”

After that it is the stated intention of the Holy Father to show that from that blessed time on the Holy See has never allowed any part of its care for Illyria to flag. In the course of this Apostolic Letter covering its history some forty Popes are mentioned by name to give substance to this declared intention.

As can be expected, the history of the region as unfolded in this Apostolic Letter presents the usual checkered appearance to the casual student. The unity the Holy Father imposes on this picture is the steadfast interest shown by the Holy See in the vicissitudes of the peoples populating those remote regions, by which a seemingly earthly interest nevertheless brings out the divine interest of the Father of all. The struggles of the Holy See are the manifestations of the divine Providence. Part of these ‘vicissitudes’ incorporate the loss at times of the episcopal sees which had been established in the region under previous pontificates.

When the Holy Father arrives at a description of the 12th century, and after noting that “**a happier time is apparent because of a reunion with the Holy See**”, he makes the following remarkable statement:

“However happy this state of affairs may have been, it did not last long. Because not much later, from the vicinity of Bulgaria, other evils came forth and became widespread and far worse than that which went before. These evils had their origin in the old errors of the Manichaeans which gave their name to the sect of the Patarenses. From this sad

concurrence of evils, which for three centuries fed on these regions, much damage was done to the Faith and morals of the peoples living in those territories.”

So the new pestilence was sown by the Bulgarians; it had its origin in the ancient errors of the Manichaeans, and it was so vehement that it lasted for the best part of three centuries, from ca 1170 – 1470. Thirteen Popes are mentioned by name, from Innocentius III (+1216) until Sixtus IV (+1484), who during this time did something about this sad state of affairs. In the next couple of pages the Apostolic Letter then deals with some of the activities undertaken by these Pontiffs, and it is in this context that first mention is made of a measure which seems to have its repercussions in our days.

“The members of the religious families of St. Francis and St. Dominic can claim for themselves a large share of the glory of this happy state of affairs (a return to the yoke of the Gospel) of whom not a few, slain by the heretics, died a glorious death for the Name of Christ.”

The Holy Father does not indicate when these monks arrived there, but addressing himself in the next sentence to what occurred in the middle of 1300, and taking into account that *St. Dominic* died in 1221, and *St. Francis* in 1226, it appears that the Holy See did not waste any time in dispatching those new religious to these outlying shores.

In 1233, acting on a report of his predecessor’s legate, Gregorius IX (+1241) increased the number of Episcopal Sees in Pannonia. The same was done for Bosnia during the reign of Pius II (+1464). Again the Holy Father mentions several centuries (from ca 1430 – 1730) of ups and downs with regards to those regions. And for the second time the Franciscans get singled out for a distinction:

“In this matter the perseverance and virtues of the Franciscans shine out with glory when, in the course of propagating the Faith in these provinces, they at times even shed their blood to bring forth outstanding fruits in the service of salvation and true religion.”

Nevertheless, in spite of all this obvious good, Pope Leo XIII returns once again to the fundamental theme of his Apostolic Letter when immediately afterwards he mentions:

“However, since Our Predecessors were not blind to the enormous damage sustained by those to whom for a long time the care of a Pastor is being denied, ... an Apostolic

Vicariate was established in 1735 in the place of the See of Bosnia.”

The mind of the Holy Father Pope Leo XIII is becoming very clear. Recognizing any good that had been done during those troublesome centuries and giving that good its proper due, he nevertheless states in the above quoted words that it is the view of the whole *papacy* that in the care of souls no good can ever come near the greatest good of them all: for Catholics to live under a bishop in a well-run diocese.

Thus, giving glory to God that the hour had come for him to restore to these regions the Catholic Hierarchy in its full powers, Pope Leo XIII, before launching into the administrative details of this important move, concludes the historico-doctrinal part of his Letter with these important words:

“For it can no longer be subject to doubt that the Hierarchical Administration of Ecclesiastical Matters, [in which, as is the case with the way the human body is joined together, the variety itself of the ranks and services in a wonderful way contributes to the wellbeing of all the parts and to the way in which they harmonize with one another because of the common bond of Faith and Love, and because of the authority of the Supreme Head guiding and correlating everything] must for this reason be highly esteemed because, as it slowly in-creases all the supports on which the religious life of souls depends, and as it directs the powers of everybody towards the common good, the faithful use one and the same Rule of Discipline in the variety of services that make out the Christian life, and because the souls of all are knitted together much more tightly with the bond of peace and love.”

Here the *value* and the *necessity* of the Hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church are being spelled out in the course and in the context of Her official teaching, and it is obvious that it was far removed from this Holy Father’s mind when he took pains to write all this down, giving each one his due, that there would come a time in which the Franciscans would force the peoples of these regions to choose between them and the bishops. *And in portraying Our Lady as taking sides with the Franciscans against the established Hierarchy vested in the bishops, the Franciscans have held Her up before the whole world as contradicting authoritative Catholic teaching expounded here in an official Apostolic Letter, issued for the very purpose of re-establishing the Hierarchy over and above the good that may have been done by Religious Orders. Nay, to give to this good the very foundation it still requires.*

This concludes our investigation of Pope Leo XIII's *Apostolic Letter* of 1881 by which he restored for the greatest good of the Catholics living in those regions the old Hierarchies of Illyricum, first established by the Apostle of the Gentiles, St. Paul.

We can now turn our attention to this Pope's encyclical which he had issued the year before in 1880. The papal intent for giving to the Church this *encyclical* was to prepare the way for the 1881 *Apostolic Letter* studied so far. In this encyclical-of-preparation the Holy Father underlines the weight of what we have just studied, his thoughts on the importance of Catholics living under the care of bishops in well-run dioceses, by elevating both the memory as well as the feast days of the two outstanding missionaries of these Dalmatian regions, Sts. Cyrillus and Methodius. And in doing so this address to the whole Church, in its own way, goes through the history of this part of the Balkan, mentioning dates and activities of the Holy See in relation to Bosnia – Herzegovina.

And then, towards the end of his encyclical, as a kind of summary, this far-seeing Pope makes the following remarkable statement:

“Nor can it be said that by the death of either Cyrillus or Methodius the solicitude of the Holy See for the Slavonic people had been spent or had come to an end.”

Neither - as we have seen from the foregoing - can it be said that the solicitude of the Holy See for the peoples of the Slavonic regions had been spent or had come to an end because of the care the Religious Orders had exhibited from time to time over the centuries. And how does the Holy Father express this solicitude of the Holy See *over and above* what others may have done?

“This is what We watch very carefully, this is the only thing We want: to see to it with all Our might that the peoples of Slavonic origin be instructed by the vastly superior plenitude of bishops and priests. That they may be confirmed in true obedience to Jesus Christ through the profession of the one true Faith. And that they may experience every day how great is the power for good that emanates from what has been established by the Catholic Church for the wellbeing of family life and that of the State.”

From this 1880 encyclical we can clearly see what Leo XIII had in mind when he brought it to fruition the year after in 1881. The fruits of the *vastly superior plenitude* for Catholics living under the care of bishops and diocesan priests in communion

with the Catholic Church are being spelled out here: *true obedience, the profession of the one true Faith*, and to experience how great is the *power for good* that emanates from structures established by the Catholic Church for the well-being of family life and that of the State.

To portray Our Blessed Mother as being totally opposed to this unity under a well-established and properly functioning Hierarchy as well as to the benefits that flow from this unity with Rome, would be the same as saying that She is in Hell with all the other apostates and unbelievers. Since this is impossible we can only come to *one* conclusion: that the Medjugorje ‘apparitions’ and ‘messages’ themselves come from that infernal place.

“In the end My Immaculate Heart will triumph.”